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6 April 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Andrew W. Marshall  
Director, Net Assessment Group  
National Security Council

SUBJECT : NSCIC Working Group Paper on  
Crisis Situations

- Andy*
1. This is in response to your request for some specific suggestions regarding the handling of intelligence reporting during crises. For convenience the following comments have been keyed to the relevant sections of the Working Group Comments paper.
  2. Paragraph 4, section a(2) of the Working Group paper suggests that "special liaison should be maintained between the office of the DCI and the NSC Staff...." Since these studies were written new and vastly improved communication and liaison between the NSC Staff and the producing offices of CIA have been instituted. The various pertinent desks in these offices are now in continuing and regular contact with their opposites on the Staff. In addition, we are now supplying on a continuous basis analytical comment to the White House Situation Room on items used in the Situation Room's briefings for Dr. Kissinger. In view of these developments, it is not clear from the language of this section if the current, and improving, liaison is meant or if the establishment of some additional channel for a particular crisis is meant. To clarify, I suggest that the language read:

"At the onset of a crisis and for its duration, a special substantive liaison officer be assigned by the DCI to the NSC Staff to provide intelligence producers with a better understanding and feedback on specific consumer concerns and to monitor intelligence community responses."

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3. Paragraph 4, section b(2) suggests that DCI presentations in crisis situations should include community judgments and indicate areas in which variant interpretations exist. These are laudable goals, but they cannot be achieved under current operating procedures. The DCI briefings on the current situation are usually prepared by the Task Force in CIA established to deal with the crisis reporting. Task Forces in operation in other agencies are separated widely around Washington. To solve this problem, and to deal also with the question of the mass of duplicative situation reports that flood the policy makers (a question which is not covered in the Comments paper), would require the establishment of an inter-agency Task Force for current intelligence reporting in a crisis. The DCI could establish such a Task Force to include participation by current intelligence analysts from all intelligence agencies. This Task Force would operate out of CIA headquarters. Its situation reports would be community-wide products and would be the situation reports sent to the White House. Each agency could, of course, maintain its own Task Force, if it desired, for departmental concerns, but their reports would not go to the White House. This would help eliminate over-lapping, duplicative, and out-of-phase reporting while assuring that all information and all views were represented. At the same time, this body would be preparing the DCI presentations to the high-level policy maker at WSAG and other top-level meetings; such presentations would thus also be a community-wide product and could take into account variant interpretations.

4. Paragraph 4, section b(3) recommends that a vehicle or format be found to make judgments with a wider perspective and more in-depth analysis than heretofore. I suggest that such a vehicle already exists in the SNIE mechanism. It need only be called into play. With the improved liaison noted above the intelligence community would be in a better position to identify the key policy problems agitating the policy maker and could respond with a SNIE. When properly tasked, the SNIE mechanism has in the past been able to respond with an intelligence community product in a matter of hours. Should it appear that for some reason the SNIE mechanism will not do the trick, I would suggest the establishment of a separate inter-agency Task Force, chaired by an appropriate officer from the Board of National Estimates, comprised of analysts drawn from the estimative shops of the various agencies. The function of this Task Force would be to stand aside from the current, daily reporting and to provide the in-depth analysis with broader perspective which has not been done in the past.

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5. Paragraph 5, section c asks how a near-real-time evaluation of intelligence support to the policy maker can be accomplished. If the suggestions above were incorporated in our handling of crisis reporting, the information needed for evaluation could be produced by these same groups. Each of the Task Forces would be charged with producing, as their last act before they disband, an evaluation of the product. The key member of the NSC Staff who had been handling the crisis and had been the requestor and recipient of much of the intelligence input would be queried at the same time for his evaluation. It should be standard operating procedure for each Task Force, the current intelligence one and the estimative one, to keep complete logs during the crisis. To the extent possible, the NSC Staff member would also keep a log. The special liaison officer to the NSC Staff would be expected to keep a daily log as well. Using this material, a near-real-time evaluation could be accomplished.

/s/ Ed

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